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SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED BY RURAL YOUTH WHO MOVE TO URBAN COMMUNITIES.

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PERPLEXING PROBLEMS HAVE ARISEN BECAUSE OF THE MIGRATION PATTERN OF YOUNG ADULTS FROM RURAL AREAS TO URBAN CENTERS IN THE UNITED STATES. SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS INCLUDE--(1) YOUTH ADJUSTING TO THE ADULT WORLD, (2) MOVING FROM THE SUB-CULTURE WHERE EARLY TRAINING WAS RECEIVED TO A DIFFERENT SUB-CULTURE, AND (3) PREPARATION FOR THE CONTINUALLY CHANGING WORLD OF WORK AND STYLE OF LIFE. MANY OF THESE RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS HAVE BEEN PUERTO RICANS, SOUTHERN WHITES AND NEGROES, WHITES FROM THE PLAINS, SPANISH-AMERICANS FROM THE SOUTHWEST, AND INDIANS. SOME SURVEYS CONCLUDE THAT THE RURAL MIGRANT IS DISADVANTAGED WHEN SEEKING AN URBAN JOB AND WHEN ADJUSTING TO THE URBAN COMMUNITY. THIS STEMS FROM THE VAST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL CULTURES. A PATTERN OF PROBLEMS OR DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS ARISE THROUGH THE LIFE-TIME OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL. THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS IS THAT OF SEQUENTIAL LEARNING, AND SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS ARE PRESENTED WHICH COULD BE INCORPORATED IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR RURAL YOUTH. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D.C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

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SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS NEEDED BY RURAL YOUTH WHO MOVE TO URBAN COMMUNITIES

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Born and nurtured in the rural world, the migrant is transplanted to an urban world with little or no preconditioning. The problems that result are many and complex, have persisted through time and yet are unique to each new migrant. The following quotations illustrate the long-time persistence of the problem and the lack of understanding on the part of the old residents of a receiving community.

"And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Leviticus XIX 33-34

"But here is the problem -- Why can't they manage to live a little better? Their income is fairly good. Yet they never buy clothes for their children, or any household supplies such as blankets, towels, scissors, clothes pins. Medical care is a joke to them. They all seem to have so much pride that they are insulted if we try to advise them. I don't think they want anyone to hand out anything to them; but why are they so blind as to what is a necessity? Many of us, including our teachers, will be grateful to you for any explanation you may have on the background of these folks."
(Taken from a letter from an old resident in a Maryland community describing 25 Kentucky migrant families who live in her community.)

Migrants have existed since the beginning of time but the problems have been different for different time periods and for different situations. The advice of the stages and the desires of an understanding neighbor are in accord as to the importance of human relations, but the need for a bridge to assist the migrant in his adaptive processes continues. Recently in America the migration pattern has been a continuing flow of young adults from rural areas to urban centers. The problems of here and now are three-fold:

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1) youth adjusting to the adult world, 2) moving from the sub-culture whereearly training was received to a different sub-culture and 3) preparation for the continually changing world of work and style of life. This paper is an attempt to bring to you a description of what is happening, a statement of the development needs of young adults in general and an idea of the differences in the rural and urban sub-cultures. It is also an attempt to stimulate your thinking as to methods and programs that can be developed in the rural communities of origin and in the urban centers that will alleviate the frustrations of the migrant and will result in symbiotic relations among sub-cultures rather than a clash of cultures or the diminishing of the importance of sub-cultures in America.

Characteristics of the Rural-Urban Migrants

Currently in America there are about a million rural youth reaching the age of 18 each year.1/ If we take Kentucky as a typical rural State that has had considerable outmigration, the magnitude can be demonstrated. The Census of 1960 showed Kentucky to have about three million people. There were 1 1/2 million people who had been born in Kentucky but were living in other States in 1960 and 1/2 million people living in Kentucky who had been born outside the State.

Whereas the 1960 census reported half of the Nation's population changing residence in a 5 year period, 40 percent of the young adults moved each year. About half of the total immigrants are young adults.

If the present trend continues about half of our rural youth will establish residence in urban areas. The flow is continuous but there is considerable moving back and forth with about a fourth returning to rural areas permanently. College, a trade school or the armed services may be an intermediate step between high school and a fairly stable residence for adult life. An estimated third of the rural migrants move to urban areas as unmarried youth. The remainder get married prior to moving and move as family units often with small children. About one-fourth of the rural migrants are from the farm portion of the rural population.

Large proportions of the rural-urban migrants have been Puerto Ricans, Southern whites, Southern Negroes, whites from the Plain's States, Spanish-Americans from the Southwest, Indians, and from other rural areas generally. These general types are varied as to the culture of their community of origin and there is considerable variation within each type.

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Migrants generally are young, are looking for a better way of life, have aspirations to succeed, have more education than the older members of their communities of origin, and have learned the style of life of the community of origin. However they have less education in quantity and in quality than those of their own age group who matured in urban centers.. They come from communities classified as having a poverty sub-culture, as well as a sub-culture geared to rural living and so are at a disadvantage in the more competitive urban environment.

An optimistic picture of rural youth was reported in the 1963 nationwide study of Problems, Attitudes and Aspirations of Rural Youth.2/ Osborne stated in summary: "The survey indicates that today's young people have worthwhile objectives, are willing to exert themselves, and feel that the future holds many opportunities for them. . . . In general, they are concerned about what they can do to shape the future and realize the opportunities the future holds for them."

A middle position is taken by Bogue and Hagood 3/ who concluded that migration is undertaken by the more adaptive (younger) members of the community when there are few alternatives other than to migrate.

However much courage and ambition the rural migrant might have he is disadvantaged in the urban community in seeking jobs and in adjusting to the adult world in a new community. Beijer,4/ in a recent study of European rural-urban migrants, stated "The true country man finds the city an inhospitable environment." Burchinal, Haller and Taves5/ came to a similar but less blunt conclusion in 1962 after reviewing over 50 research studies conducted in 25 States. In general the rural males have less success in the urban labor market than do urban males. The rural migrants are less active politically, are less likely to join churches or clubs, are slower to enter into urban organizational life, and have lower occupational aspirations than do urban boys. They are less acquainted with sources of information about the labor market, talk less to their parents about jobs although parents are the main source of information. Criteria for choosing a job also differed from urban boys in that rural boys gave a higher priority to being your own boss, working with friends, interesting work, and working with things not people. In terms of personality the rural boys were more shy, submissive, distrustful of others, had more maladjustments, were self-depreciating, and felt less control over events that influenced their life.

While not total handicaps, the general lower aspirational level for college and jobs, knowledge of sources of information, apparent reluctance to join formal organizations, and lack of aggressiveness of the rural male are disadvantages in the urban competition. These handicaps are not innate but can be lessened by educational experiences.

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Migrants, faced with the difficulties of adjusting to urban life, generally make a satisfactory adjustment over a period of years. Some make serious attempts to adjust, others resist changing themselves and do so only after all else fails, and still others expect urban life to do the adjusting. In any event, there are minor and sometimes serious frustrations, feelings of inadequacy, delinquent behavior as viewed by the urban community and employment problems.

Migrants are sometimes overcome with the frustrations of adjustment to the extent that they become mentally ill. A limited number of studies in New York, Ohio and California conclude that "although race is still an important factor in differential rates of mental illness, migration status per se is apparently a major determinant of admission to hospitals for the mentally ill of all classes of natives for all disorders." The evidence is not final since the higher incidence for migrants may be due to a selectivity of the disease prone, or it may be due to higher rates for all people in the state of origin rather than the more obvious causation of being due to the migration process and the difficulties of adjustments to the new environment.

Technological Change

A more general factor requiring adjustment is that of technological change. Both the urban community and the rural community are undergoing change at a very rapid rate in America. The employment situation is changing at such a rate that it has been estimated that half of the jobs ten years from now do not exist at present. Preparation for the rapidly changing technology is an additional set of problems the youth of today must face. There are problems of here and now as well as those of the future. For example, it is expected that the average young person will need to have two major retraining programs after being trained for his first "life-time" job. Whatever the cause, there is a pattern of problems or developmental tasks that arise through the life-time of every individual.

The problems are both general and specific. Developmental tasks expressed in general terms change with the aging of the individual. Expressed in specific terms they will vary from one sub-culture to another and among the social classes.

I want to dwell upon the importance of developmental tasks in discussing the problems or needs of the young migrant and give an example of how they operate in a specific sub-culture before discussing the perceived needs of some migrants and what we as experts see as their needs.

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Developmental Tasks

The general idea of developmental tasks as described by Havighurst 7/ and others is that there are tasks which must be accomplished at various ages to assure a satisfactory life at later ages. Some tasks arise out of physical maturation, others arise out of the cultural pressures of society and the third source is the specific personal values and aspirations of the individual. The major identifiable stages in the life cycle of man are youth, adulthood and old age. Each has several significant sub-stages.

Early adulthood, our concern today, has been described by Havighurst as a time of special sensitivity and unusual readiness to learn. Yet the amount of educative effort expended by society for young adults is probably less than for any other age period except for old age. It is in this stage of early adulthood where the young migrants fall with their problems of the here and now.

Young adults have the tasks of selecting a marriage partner, the first pregnancy, the first serious full-time job, the first illness of children, the first experience of selecting a house and furnishing it, the first venturing of a child to school. Correlatives of these tasks are those involving military service, securing credit, voting, establishing a relationship with the marriage partner, a new relationship with parents and other adults, joining adult social groups, new forms of recreation, insurance, etc. Among the decisions is the one of residence -- to move or not to move. The list is limitless.

I repeat, these tasks become specific in a specific cultural setting. A migrant who has learned the tasks of one culture as a youth is expected to carry on in a new environment where the specific tasks are different -- they are related to the new urban environment.

The young rural migrant has attempted to satisfy the demands of the developmental tasks for a rural sub-culture and usually for a middle or lower-class specification. The developmental tasks for the transitional period of entering the adult world are many and complex even if he remains in the same sub-culture and does not aspire for a higher social class. The complications of upward mobility and of a different sub-culture necessitates that he make an extra effort to become acquainted with the nature of the new sub-culture and possibly relearn the tasks of an earlier age for the new sub-culture and for the higher class to which he aspires.

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Cultural Differences

The seriousness of the differences between the two sub-cultures, rural and urban, has been fairly well documented. First, the theme of America represents one general theme -- democracy, the individual striving to succeed, equal opportunities, the importance of education, and open channels of occupational choice. None of these ideas operate perfectly but they are the basic values of American life. Various sub-cultures deviate from the general theme -- the sub-culture of poverty, the sub-culture of middle-class urban people, the sub-cultures of various foreign born and the second and third generations, the American Indian, The Southern Appalachian Mountaineer, the Spanish-speaking peoples of the Southwest, the Puerto Ricans, The American Negro. And there are variations within each of these sub-cultures. What is the nature of the urban culture and of the various rural sub-cultures? A few comparisons will serve to demonstrate the differences. Jack Weller has compared the culture of the middle-class-urban community with that of the Southern Appalachian community in his book, Yesterday's People. 8/ The urban middle-class sub-culture was characterized as having an acceptance of change, an emphasis on community and formal organization, a recognition of expert opinion, tasks in the home shared by husband and wife, a readiness to join groups, the use of government to achieve goals, an idea or object oriented life pattern. In contrast, the culture of Southern Appalachia was described as individualistic, personal, fatalistic, with a belief in self-knowledge, a sharp delineation of tasks between husband and wife, antagonism toward government and law, orientation toward existence, and a rejection of formal groups. In rural-urban studies that have measured these characteristics more precisely it was shown that the differences were not sharp dichotomies but were differences in degree with a considerable amount of overlapping.

Using Weller's description of an urban culture as a base for comparison, an examination of the rural cultural background of Southern Negroes, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans as prepared for use by the Migration Services Committees of Chicago would be in order. 9/ The authors point out that there were a number of differences in addition to the obvious ones of physical appearance and speech. E. Franklin Frazier emphasizes that in spite of considerable variation in present-day living for Negroes in the South the pattern was set by plantation life. The Negro culture is a folk culture with a strong dependence on feelings and sentiments, kinship groups, dependence on others to make decisions and plans for the future, a dominance of the mother in a disintegrating family life, a religion that is largely based on escape and an emphasis on other worldliness. Schooling for Negroes has been a rather recent origin. All of these features are rapidly changing and the Negro is becoming integrated into the American community both in the rural South and in the urban areas.

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For Mexico the most important cultural feature of living was the family with the household often having three or four generations under one roof. This extended family was dominated by the eldest male who gave the appearance of being aloof from the members of the family. There were sharp differences in the chores and responsibilities of sex and age of the family members. Religious forms were evident in many of the rituals of life. Loitering on the street in Mexico was a means of getting the news. In America such behavior is often considered to be delinquency. A study in San Antonio indicated that three generations were needed to substitute the American urban cultural traits for those of Mexico.

Puerto Rico was described in terms of its emerging identity. The "new Puerto Rican" is full of hope, plans, and ambition. The Puerto Rican is sensitive and adaptive to changes in the physical and social environment -- weather, tempo of life, freedom of children, women working, racial discrimination -- and these are serious changes for the migrant going to New York or Chicago. Rapid adjustment to the new patterns is creating many stresses in the typical close, warm, friendly Puerto Rican family.

The relative ease of superficial adjustment by Puerto Ricans is illustrated by a case situation described by Clarence Senior.10/ A judge berated the mother of a young Puerto Rican youth for not having made her teenage son "get a good, decent American haircut instead of wearing those Puerto Rican sideburns." The mother sobbed that in Puerto Rico he had worn his hair short but that "since all American boys want to look, talk and dress like Elvis Presley" she couldn't keep her son from wearing sideburns. The form of dress and the relationship between parents and children had both been revised to meet New York standards but both changes created new problems.

Migrants generally are seeking a better way of life in terms of jobs and living conditions. Relatively the community of origin is a sub-culture of poverty, with all of the characteristics of such a sub-culture. Poverty by definition is "a lack of." 11/ The specifics are income, housing, health, education, aspiration, knowledge and skills. Those included in the poverty group are disadvantaged in the competition for the good things of life. With 29 percent of the Nation's population, the rural portion had about half of the population in the poverty classification using an income criteria. Although the level of living of all people is improving, Gunnar Myrdal has concluded, after fairly rigorous examination, that the gap between the haves and the have-nots has actually widened in recent years. 12/

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Self-perception of Needs

Self-perception of needs by the migrants are not the same as those interpreted by social scientists from data obtained in surveys of those indicated by employers, social workers, health officials, and the police. Each views the problems from his own reference point. A longitudinal study of migrants from one country in Eastern Kentucky to Southern Ohio provides a partial answer to the question of problems as migrants perceive them. Schwarzweller has labeled these problems as "botherations." 13/ One in five migrants said they had no problems. Two-thirds liked the new location and all were satisfied with the new kind of life. However, 95 percent had relatives living close by and all returned home at least once a year. Half felt that "home" was in Kentucky and four out of five wanted to be taken back to Kentucky for burial. The botherations they listed were mainly adjustments to the new environment such as finding their way around town, making new friends, crowds, getting used to Ohio people, being homesick, night shift work, being confused about the job routines, and traffic. These responses are mainly related to the physical environment and show little recognition of the real problems of becoming integrated into urban life or consideration of long-time plans or goals.

The experts see the problems in terms of a model by which migrants can make satisfactory adaptations to the new environment.

The idea of developmental tasks is that of sequential learning. Learning how to walk, talk, think and behave at a given age enables a person to adequately meet the tasks of a later age. If the tasks of early adulthood have an urban middle-class orientation the tasks of an earlier age should also have an urban middle-class orientation. Probably the ideal way to adjust to urban life is to be born there so that at 18 years of age there has been 18 years of adjustment. For the rural youth the educational program should be two-fold -- an awareness of the age-graded tasks of the urban world and a practicing of the age-graded tasks of the rural world. The adult product can represent the best of two worlds.

To bring about a person related to two worlds, several adaptable mechanisms already exist and can become more functional. The family can provide a refuge of security and encourage the younger members to venture into new environmental situations (LePlay's stem family). The schools are viable cultural bridges between the culture of residence and other cultures of the world. They can strengthen the local cultural patterns and provide an introduction to other cultures. There are many levels of complexity for considering comparative cultures ranging from food and clothing to social organization to value systems.

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The comparison can be made meaningful at all grade levels and in a positive way of indicating differences but not exhibiting superiorities. The school program can include knowledge, development of attitudes and some direct observation and practice of behavior patterns. Several concrete suggestions as to methods are therefore in order:

1) exchange programs of living in both rural and urban cultures, summer camps for urban youth can have as a counterpart summer "camps" in cities for rural youth,
2) short-term exploratory tours of cities,
3) the latter part of the compulsory schooling years to be spent in cities so that there will be some living in cities prior to the beginning of the life work,
4) study programs on "how to be a migrant" similar to the orientation programs offered by the Peace Corps for prospective applicants,
5) career exploration projects such as has been offered by the Extension Service through 4-H Clubs.

The receiving community has several program approaches to the servicing of the needs of rural migrants: 1) the preparation of the urban citizentry as to the nature of the migrants, 2) preparation of the governmental agencies and service groups, 3) an educational program for migrants as to what services are available, 4) new programs to integrate the old and the new cultures that preserve features of each and permit a mutual tolerance and respect yet designed to bring about a union for establishing new goals and programs that will be permissive. In summary:

1. Youth will continue to move from the rural world to the urban world.

2. They move because they are seeking something in the urban world that is not available in the rural world -- jobs and a better way of life.

3. There is a cultural clash for the rural youth entering the urban world but over time most of them make a satisfactory adaptation.

4. Adjustment problems arise from an inability or unwillingness to cope with the duality of two worlds and to resolve the differences in a functional manner.

5. Both the community of origin and the receiving community have roles to play in anticipating the problems and in establishing programs to socialize youth for adult living.

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Clarence Senior expressed the need for the receiving community to be concerned with the human relations problems of the migrant in his book aptly titled, Strangers -- Then Neighbors,14/ as follows, "Perhaps the greatest need of the world today is a willingness on the part of individuals and groups to accept people on their own terms and not to hold and express the Philistine attitude of 'Thank God I am not as he.'" Since we tend to fear or misunderstand those people who are different from ourselves, this can happen only through education.

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